

***Meconella oregana* Nutt.**

white meconella

Papaveraceae (Poppy Family)

Status: State Threatened, USFWS Species of Concern

Rank: G3?S2

General Description: Slender annual, 1-4 inches tall, the stem simple or sparingly branched; basal leaves spatula-like, entire, in a rosette; cauline leaves opposite, sessile; single white flowers on a slender stalk; petals 6, stamens 3-6.

Identification Tips: This species can be distinguished from other members of the genus by the following combination of characters: leaves basal and cauline, flowers white, the 4 to 6 stamens are in 1 series, and the petals are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long. *M. oregana* is the only member of the genus that occurs in WA.

Phenology: The species has a very short blooming period, which varies, depending on the year, from late March to early April.

Range: Known from Vancouver Island, British Columbia, the lowlands west of the Cascades in Washington, the Columbia River Gorge in both Washington and Oregon, the Willamette Valley in Oregon, southward to Jackson County, Oregon and perhaps into California. In WA, it occurs in the Eastern Cascades, Western Cascades, and Puget Trough physiographic provinces.

Habitat: Occurs primarily in open grassland, sometimes within a mosaic of forest/grassland on gradual to almost 100% slopes. Tree species present, depending on the site, include Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, and Garry oak. Grasses and forbs include shootingstar (*Dodecatheon poeticum*), woodland star (*Lithophragma bulbifera*) and Douglas' blue-eyed-grass (*Sisyrinchium douglasii*). Areas are wet to moist in spring, but dry out by early summer. Elevation: 100 to 450 feet.

Ecology: Fire probably played a role historically in maintenance of the habitat both in terms of reducing tree and shrub invasion of its habitat and in terms of expansion and growth of competing grasses and forbs. As an annual, the species probably responds to winter/spring moisture and temperature patterns, but likely faces serious competition from weedy annuals.

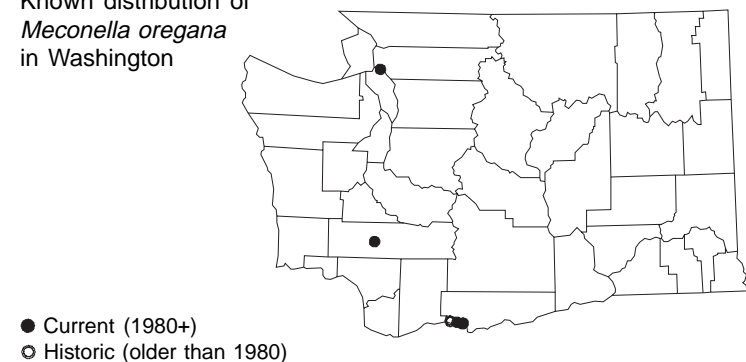
Meconella oregana

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Known distribution of
Meconella oregana
in Washington



Meconella oregana

white meconella



Reid Schuller



Tracy Rush

Meconella oregana

white meconella

State Status Comments: This species is currently only known from 3 locations in WA; it was historically also known from the grasslands in the Puget lowlands.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed in the Klickitat River to White Salmon River area, as well as in remnant grassland habitats in the Puget lowlands and San Juan Islands. Systematic inventories for this species have not been conducted.

Threats and Management Concerns: The proliferation of weedy species poses a significant threat to this species. Recreational use of some sites may also contribute to habitat degradation via soil compaction. Grazing may also be an issue at some sites. Localized changes in hydrology are also a potential threat.

Comments: This relatively small plant is easy to overlook, particularly since it apparently flowers for a very short period (1 week?) each year.

References:

- Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1964. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 2: Salicaceae to Saxifragaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 597 pp.
- Jolley, R. 1988. *Wildflowers of the Columbia Gorge: A Comprehensive Field Guide*. Oregon Historical Society Press. Portland, Oregon. 331 pp.
- Pojar, J. and A. MacKinnon. 1994. *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia & Alaska*. B.C. Forest Service, Research Program. Lone Pine Publishing, Vancouver, B.C. 527 pp.